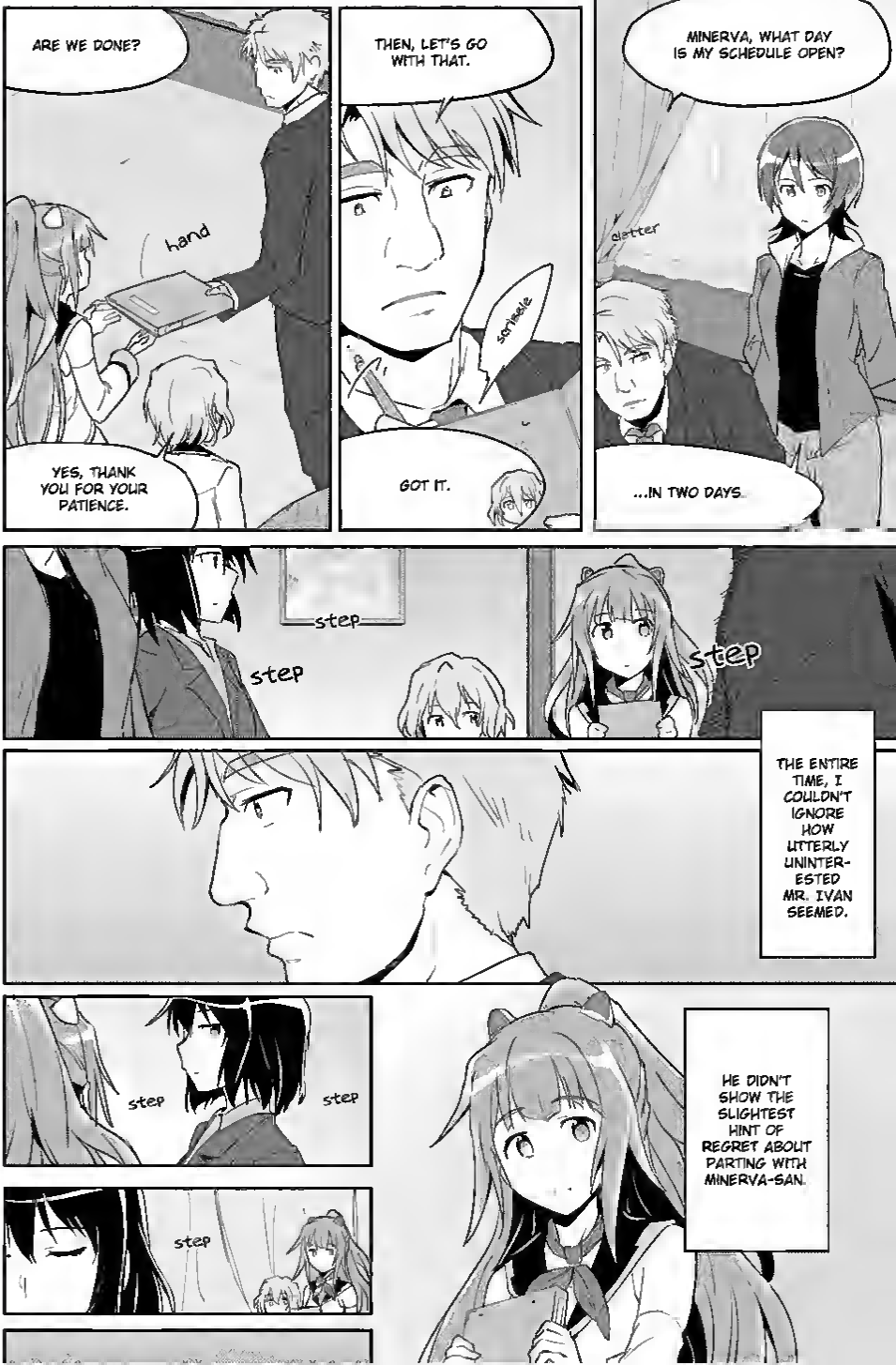
T/N HORIZONTAL TEXT MEANS RUSSIAN
EITHER WAY IS FINE.
..ANYTHING ELSE?
THE OS CAN ALSO BE REINSTALLED, SO YOU CAN CONTINUE TO USE...
IF YOU OPT TO BUY A NEW UNIT,
WE OFFER A 30% CASHBACK IF YOU TRADE IN YOUR CURRENT ONE.
...SO, THE OWNER HAS SEVERAL OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM
FOR WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE RETRIEVAL.
RUSSIAN FEDE-RATION EMBASSY
MEMORIES:08
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE BEEN NERVOUS ON THE JOB.
PLEASE SIGN HERE.
THIS TIME, WE'VE BEEN ASSIGNED A RUSSIAN DIPLOMAT.
NOW, ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO FIGURE OUT A GOOD TIME FOR RETRIEVAL...
I'M SORRY,
WE'RE RUNNING SHORT ON TIME IF WE COULD WRAP THIS UP...
IT GIVES OFF SORT OF A MATURE FEMININE VIBE.
I'VE BEEN SMELLING SOMETHING KIND OF PLEASANT FOR A WHILE NOW...
PERFUME, HUH.
I DON'T SPEAK RUSSIAN, SO THERE'S NOT A LOT I CAN HELP WITH.
I ENDED UP FOCUSING ON EVERYTHING BUT THE CONSERVATION.
WHAT INTRIGUED ME THE MOST WAS...


ARE WE DONE?
hand
YES, THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE.
THEN, LET'S GO WITH THAT.
scribble
GOT IT.
MINERVA, WHAT DAY IS MY SCHEDULE OPEN?
clatter
...IN TWO DAYS.
step
step
step
THE ENTIRE TIME, I COULDN'T IGNORE HOW UTTERLY UNINTER-ESTED MR. IVAN SEEMED.
step
step
step
HE DIDN'T SHOW THE SLIGHTEST HINT OF REGRET ABOUT PARTING WITH MINERVA-SAN.

BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THAT WAS UNNECESSARY.
I DID EXPLAIN THE POST-RETRIEVAL SERVICES, TOO,
whoosh
WHAT WERE YOU TALKING ABOUT EARLIER?
MINERVA'S REPLACEMENT, SOFIA, WAS ALREADY THERE.
AH, THE ONE WHO WAS STANDING NEXT TO...
SHE WAS A GIFTIA TOO, HUH...
SAME AS ALWAYS, REALLY.
WE GOT THE INTRODUCTIONS OUT OF THE WAY, AND I EXPLAINED HOW EVERYTHING WORKS.
IT SEEMS SHE'S IN THE PROCESS OF TAKING OVER A LOT OF THINGS FROM MINERVA.
...I SEE.
FROM THE SOUND OF THAT SIGH,
THIS ONE'S GONNA BE INTERESTING
...EVEN THOUGH HE'S SAYING GOODBYE TO SOMEONE HE SPENT YEARS WORKING WITH,
IVAN-SAN,
SEEMS LIKE HE COULDN'T CARE LESS AND JUST WANTS TO GET IT OVER WITH.
HE WAS TOTALLY NONCHALANT WHEN HE SIGNED THE CONSENT FORM, TOO.
I THINK THAT'S JUST BECAUSE HE WAS SHORT ON TIME ..

WELL, THAT'S JUST A SCHEDULE PROBLEM, ISN'T IT?
YOU KNOW,
MINERVA STILL HAS ABOUT A WEEK'S WORTH OF HER LIFESPAN LEFT, AND YET,
THE RETRIEVAL'S IN JUST TWO DAYS...
SO, I KIND OF GET WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY...
THOUGH, YOU ARE RIGHT THAT IT WAS OVER REALLY QUICKLY.
IT FEELS LIKE YOU'RE JUST HAVING TROUBLE STOMACHING A PARTING THAT'S NOT REALLY EMOTIONALLY CHARGED IN ANY WAY.
hmm
. .MAYBE? I'M NOT REALLY SURE.
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S A PROBLEM IN TERMS OF THE ACTUAL JOB,
SO I'LL JUST THINK ABOUT THAT ON MY OWN FOR A WHILE.
DON'T LET MY BEING GLOOMY FOR NO REASON GET YOU DOWN.
. .WELL, IF YOU'RE OKAY WITH THAT, I GUESS.
...YOU WILL TALK TO ME IF IT BECOMES A PROBLEM, RIGHT?
YEAH, YEAH.
!

Y... YEAH
TSUKASA, MICHIRU, YOU'RE BACK.
!
fwoosh
.. WHAT? SOME KIND OF TROUBLE AGAIN?
AH, IT'S NOT LIKE THAT.
JUST SOMETHING I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
?
WHAT HE WANTED TO TALK ABOUT WAS THE CASE ISLA AND HE WERE WORKING ON
THE OWNER IS AN ANDROID CHILD.
'ANDROID CHILDREN' ARE CHILDREN WHO, FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER,
HAVE BEEN SEPARATED FROM THEIR REAL PARENTS, AND RAISED BY GIFTIA OR OTHER ANDROIDS.
BASICALLY, THE SAME AS ME WHEN I WAS A KID.

USUALLY, I WOULD BE THE MORE APPROPRIATE PERSON FOR THIS SORT OF CASE, BUT...
I WANTED TO LET TSUKASA HAVE THIS ONE TO BUILD UP SOME EXPERIENCE.
...SO, YOU'RE SAYING I SHOULD JUMP IN TO HELP IF SOMETHING HAPPENS.
JEEZ... EVEN THOUGH HIS TRAINING IS SUPPOSED TO BE OVER.
MM
THE SITUATION IS ABOUT WHAT YOU'D EXPECT.
MOST ANDROID CHILDREN END UP CLASHING WITH THEIR GUARDIANS AT SOME POINT
I'M SURE YOU LIED ABOUT MOM AND DAD TOO, ANYWAY!
WHO KNOWS WHAT YOU WOULDN'T LIE ABOUT IF YOU LIED ABOUT STAYING WITH ME FOREVER!
I DON'T CARE!
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU ARE MY REAL MOM OR SOMETHING!
HMM.
A LIE ... HUH.
I THINK I SORT OF GET IT.
RIGHT NOW, HE DOESN'T KNOW WHO HE IS
IT'S NOT LIKE MARCIA'S DONE SOMETHING WRONG, BUT,
HIS WORLD CAME CRASHING DOWN AFTER HE HEARD ABOUT HER LIFESPAN
MARCIA'S A GIFTIA,
SO SHE'S NOT HIS 'REAL FAMILY'.

SO HE'S STARTED DOUBTING EVEN WHAT HE THOUGHT HE KNEW ABOUT HIS REAL PARENTS.
IT'S PRETTY SCARY TO LOSE SIGHT OF WHO YOU ARE.
.....
...IS THERE SOMETHING WE CAN DO?
...I THINK THE IMPOR-TANT THING IS
TO MAKE HIM REALIZE
HOW LOVED HE WAS.
MAKE HIM REALIZE ...HUH.
I CAN HELP YOU OUT, IF YOU WANT...
REALLY? THAT'D HELP A LOT.
I'LL LET ISLA KNOW, TOO...
fwoosh
...AH
HUH?
...ACTUALLY, NEVER MIND
WHY!?
?
BECAUSE I SAID SO!
?

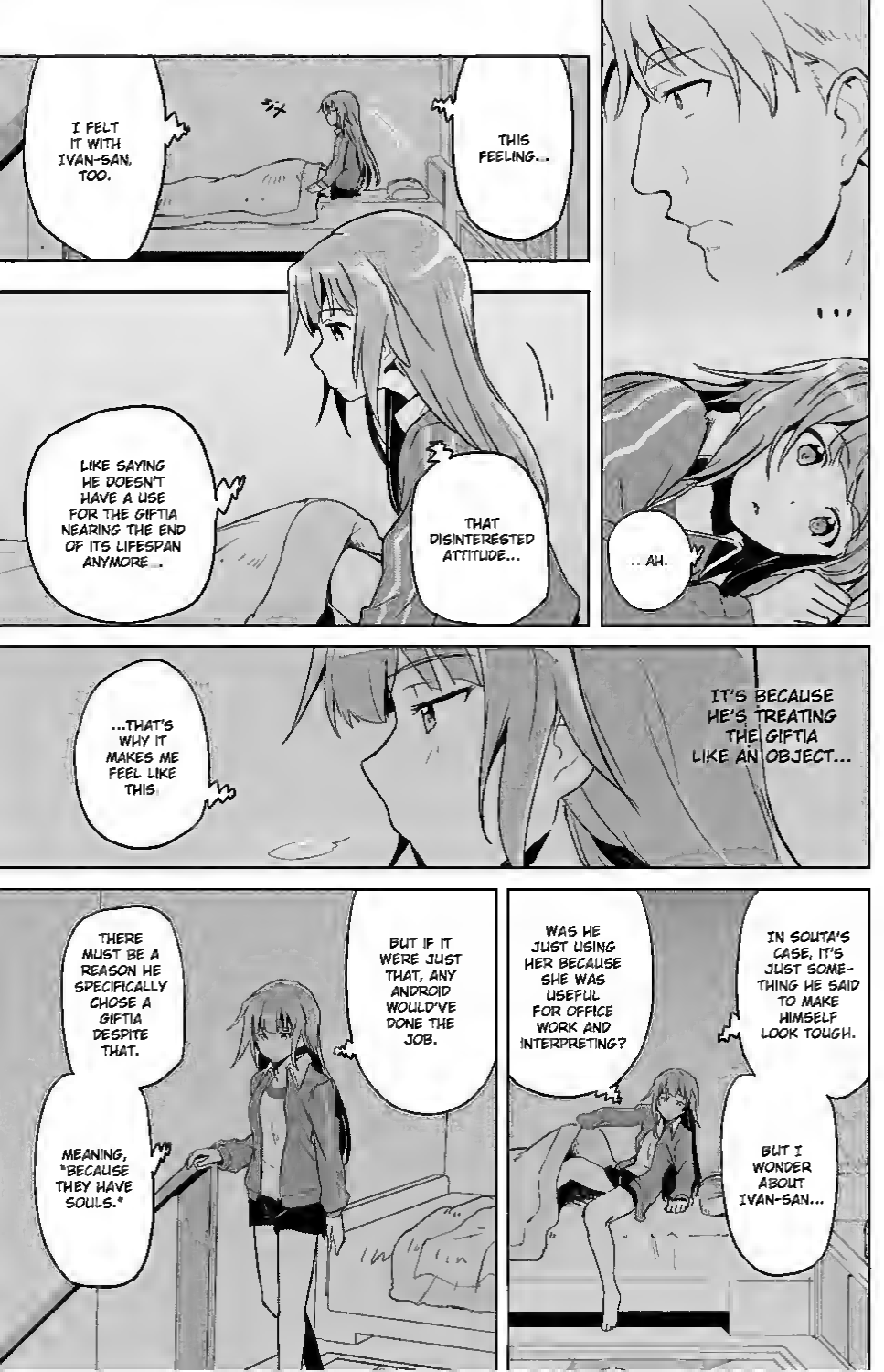
vroom
—THE NEXT DAY
THEN, WE'LL BE BACK FOR THE RETRIEVAL.
...YES, THANK YOU.
...WE SURE TOOK CARE OF THIS WEEK'S SIGNATURES EASILY, DIDN'T WE?
YEAH.
WHEN I SAW THAT WE HAD A DIPLOMAT TO DEAL WITH YESTERDAY
I THOUGHT IT'D BE A PAIN TO SET UP AN APPOINTMENT WITH HIM AND STUFF.
SO, EVERY-THING WENT QUICKLY.
AND IT SEEMED HE FULLY GRASPED HOW MUCH OF HER LIFESPAN MINERVA HAD LEFT.
HER REPLACEMENT, SOFIA, WAS ALREADY THERE.
whoosh
IT HELPED THAT HE'S THE KIND OF PERSON WHO TREATS A GIFTIA'S RETRIEVAL AS A SERIOUS MATTER.
...YEAH, EVEN GIVEN THAT HE'S IN A HURRY. I DIDN'T THINK HE'D HAVE US COME IN THE SAME DAY.
...YEAH.
THANKS TO THAT, WE HAVE LOADS OF FREE TIME NOW.
pat

...HUH?
YOU'RE NOT GONNA SAY YOU WANT TO HELP THEM BECAUSE WE HAVE THE TIME, ARE YOU?
I.. I WONDER
HOW TSUKASA AND ISLA ARE DOING.
.....
...WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT?
IS THAT REALLY ALL?
HMM.
W-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THEY CAME TO ME FOR HELP, OBVIOUSLY I'M GONNA BE CONCERNED.
I WAS JUST THINKING IT MIGHT BE GOOD TO LEND THEM A HAND IF IT LOOKS LIKE THEY NEED IT.
NOTHING~
whoosh
...SO, WHAT DID THEY SAY?
click
clack
chop
chop
chop
HM...?
THEY SAID THEY'D THROW A BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR SOUTA.
BIRTH-DAY PARTY?

THEY MENTIONED SOMETHING ABOUT MAKING A STRAWBERRY CAKE
USING A RECIPE OF HIS MOM'S THAT THEY FOUND.
HMM. THE TASTE OF MOM'S COOKING, HUH?
YEAH. THEY WANNA USE THAT TO STIMULATE HIS MEMORY
AND GET ACROSS JUST HOW LOVED HE'S BEEN.
WELL, THAT'S FINE,
BUT NEITHER OF THEM ARE ANY GOOD AT COOKING—
BZZ
BZZ
HELLO, THIS IS THE TERMINAL SERVICE..
.....
SOFIA-SAN?
...YES,
I SEE. I UNDER-STAND
YES, IT'S FINE.
...GOOD-BYE.
Pi
ZACK.
MINERVA-SAN'S RETRIEVAL WAS SUPPOSED TO BE TOMORROW, BUT,
THERE'S BEEN A CHANGE OF PLANS.
UGH.
WHY?

LET'S JUST THINK OF IT AS HAVING THE SAME AMOUNT OF LEEWAY IN OUR SCHEDULE WE SHOULD'VE HAD TO BEGIN WITH.
WELL, ANYWAY, I GUESS WE'LL NEED TO RETHINK OUR SCHEDULE...
UGHHH...
SIGH
APPARENTLY THE TAKE-OVER ISN'T GOING AS SMOOTHLY AS THEY'D PLANNED.
..THAT PART SEEMED PRETTY WELL-ARRANGED, THOUGH.
HUH?
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO ABOUT TOMORROW?
THAT'S FINE, BUT, MICHIRU,
AT LEAST THEY CAN'T CHANGE IT AGAIN.
THE UPDATED RETRIEVAL DATE IS RIGHT UP AGAINST THE DEADLINE, SO,
WHY CAN'T SHE JUST DROP IT...
CAN WE JUST MAKE TIME TO SEE SOUTA TOMORROW MORNING AND HAVE A TALK WITH HIM?
..FOR THE TIME BEING,
SIGH
SOMEHOW...
AHH...
DO YOU STILL PLAN TO HELP THOSE TWO OUT?
WE'RE GONNA END UP WITH MORE WORK TO DO AFTER ADJUSTING OUR SCHEDULE, SO,
MMM

WE'LL PROBABLY CATCH HIM ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL,
SO, I HAVE TO GET SOMETHING ACROSS IN THAT SHORT TIMEFRAME...
...NOW,
ONCE I HAVE HIM, WHAT SHOULD I SAY?
TO TRY AND SHUT AWAY THE PAIN ALONG WITH IT.
SO, HE'S CONVINCED HIMSELF THAT HIS WHOLE RELATIONSHIP WITH MARCIA HAS BEEN A LIE,
I THINK THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM IS THAT HE'S RUNNING FROM THE FACT THAT THE LAST OF HIS FAMILY IS ABOUT TO DISAPPEAR
I'M STILL WORRIED ABOUT IT.
...EVEN SO,
WHAT HE SAID WHEN HE WAS SIGNING THE CONSENT FORM...
.....
I HAVE TIMES WHEN I GET STUBBORN WITHOUT KNOWING WHY TOO.
EVEN IF I KNOW HE'S GONNA REGRET IT, THERE'S NOT A WHOLE LOT I CAN DO ABOUT IT.
FOU
MAYBE CREATING A CHANCE FOR HIM TO REALIZE AND RETHINK WHAT HE'S DOING IS THE WAY WE SHOULD APPROACH THIS
IT'S REALLY DEPRESSING...
MMM...
"YOU CAN TAKE HER AWAY AS SOON AS IT'S SIGNED!"
"I DON'T NEED HER ANYMORE!"


I FELT IT WITH IVAN-SAN, TOO.
THIS FEELING...
LIKE SAYING HE DOESN'T HAVE A USE FOR THE GIFTIA NEARING THE END OF ITS LIFESPAN ANYMORE...
THAT DISINTERESTED ATTITUDE...
.. AH.
...THAT'S WHY IT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE THIS
IT'S BECAUSE HE'S TREATING THE GIFTIA LIKE AN OBJECT...
THERE MUST BE A REASON HE SPECIFICALLY CHOSE A GIFTIA DESPITE THAT.
BUT IF IT WERE JUST THAT, ANY ANDROID WOULD'VE DONE THE JOB.
MEANING, "BECAUSE THEY HAVE SOULS."
WAS HE JUST USING HER BECAUSE SHE WAS USEFUL FOR OFFICE WORK AND INTERPRETING?
IN SOUTA'S CASE, IT'S JUST SOMETHING HE SAID TO MAKE HIMSELF LOOK TOUGH.
BUT I WONDER ABOUT IVAN-SAN...

ZZZ
ZZZ
... EVEN IF IT WAS JUST A WORK RELATION-SHIP AT FIRST,
SO, THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO FORM HEARTFELT RELATION-SHIPS.
GIFTIA MAY BE BEINGS MADE BY HUMAN HANDS, BUT...
IS THIS REALLY A RELATIONSHIP THAT CAN BE TORN APART JUST LIKE THAT?
FALSE RELATIONSHIPS THAT CAN EASILY BE TORN APART?
DOES THAT MAKE ANY RELATIONSHIPS THEY FORM ARTIFICAL,
...DAD.
ZACK.
...THAT'S NOT TRUE, NOW IS IT?

THE NEXT MORNING
AFTER I TALKED TO SOUTA,
I COULDN'T JUST LEAVE HIM ALONE.
I DON'T NEED YOUR MEMORIES!
WHO'D BELIEVE ALL THAT CRAP!
IN THE END,
WE ENDED UP HELPING OUT TSUKASA AND THE OTHERS.
HAPPY
POP
POP
BIRTHDAY!
AND, AS A RESULT-

MARCIA, I'M SORRY...
FOR CALLING YOU A LIAR...
THE BULL-HEADED SOLITA'S HEART WAS UNTAN-GLED,
BY THE NOSTALGIC STRAW-BERRY CAKE,
AND THEY WERE ABLE
TO SPEND MARCIA'S REMAINING MOMENTS AS A FAMILY.

MM...WELL, IF YOU HADN'T GONE TO HELP, WHO KNOWS IF THEY'D HAVE HAD EVERYTHING DONE ON TIME.
SORRY FOR MAKING YOU GO WITH ME
WHAT'S THERE TO APOLOGIZE ABOUT?
AH, FINALLY HOME
I'M BEAT...
I'LL FOCUS ON MY OWN WORK FROM NOW ON
RIGHT, RIGHT.
WE DON'T HAVE THAT MUCH FREE TIME ON OUR HANDS EITHER, YOU KNOW.
THOUGH, AND I HATE TO REPEAT MYSELF, YOU SHOULD REALLY TAKE IT EASIER.
GOD, IT'S A PAIN TO DEAL WITH AN OWNER WHO'S SO BUSY, HE EVEN HAS TO CHANGE THE RETRIEVAL LOCATION...
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO GO TO THE HOTEL INSTEAD OF THE EMBASSY ON THE DAY OF, THOUGH
...SO, WHAT'S OUR NEXT CASE?
IT'S MINERVA'S RETRIEVAL.
...?
THEN, LET'S DO OUR BEST TOM-ORROW!
AH, SORRY, IT'S NOTHING.
...MICHIRU?

NODCAR HOTEL
NODCA HOTEL
AH, JAPANESE ...
I HATE TO MAKE YOU ADAPT TO OUR SCHEDULE.
THANKS FOR THE OTHER DAY.
SOFIA-SAN!
ADAPTING TO CUSTOMERS' CIRCUMSTANCES IS ALSO PART OF THE JOB, AFTER ALL.
AND SHE'S AN INTER-PRETER, OBVIOUSLY SHE SPEAKS JAPANESE.
...WAIT, I'VE ALREADY TALKED TO HER ON THE PHONE BEFORE.

fwoosh
whirr
DID YOU WAIT LONG?
NO, YOU'RE RIGHT ON TIME.
I SEE.
THEN, IF YOU WILL.
WELL, THIS IS IT... SHOULD I GO AHEAD?
YES, PLEASE.
!

SCRIBBLE
YES, NOW YOU JUST NEED TO SIGN THE RETRIEVAL COMPLETION DOCUMENT.
...ARE WE DONE?
I SMELL MINERVA-SAN'S PERFUME...
THAT'S IT, THANK YOU.
THEN, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.
HE DIDN'T EVEN SAY GOODBYE ...
HE DIDN'T END UP SHOWING A SINGLE SIGN OF EMOTION.
...IN THE END,
hand

AH, NO, NOT AT..
HUH?!
...DID YOU THINK THAT HE WAS A COLD PERSON?
I'I'M SORRY! I DIDN'T MEAN TO RUIN THE ATMOSPHERE...
AH...THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
bow
IT JUST CAUGHT MY EYE
YOU MADE THAT FACE WHEN YOU CAME BY TO GET THE CONSENT FORM SIGNED, TOO.
...LIKE IVAN DOES.
IT'S JUST,
IF YOU MEAN TO KEEP UP APPEARENCES, YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR EXPRESSIONS
THEN, COULD IT BE ...
WAS BECAUSE I'D JUDGED THAT IT WAS NECESSARY...
THE REASON THE DATE WAS CHANGED
ACTUALLY, THE RETRIEVAL WAS ORIGINALLY SUPPOSED TO BE ON THE DAY YOU'D AGREED ON
THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO DON'T WANT TO SHOW WEAKNESS TO THEIR INFERIORS.

ONE OF THE DUTIES I WAS SUPPOSED TO TAKE OVER FROM MINERVA,
WAS *RELIEVING THE BOSS' STRESS* AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.
WITH THE DATE BEING WHAT IT WAS, IT DIDN'T LOOK LIKE TAKING OVER THAT TASK WAS REMOTELY POSSIBLE...
...SOFIA-SAN.
...I MIGHT'VE SAID TOO MUCH.
THEN, I'LL BE TAKING MY LEAVE, TOO.
TH-
THANK YOU SO MUCH!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY ...
I GUESS I STILL HAVE A LOT TO LEARN.

SO, IT'S NOT LIKE IVAN-SAN
whOOsh
WAS COMPLETELY FINE...
HE WAS JUST HIDING IT.

EVEN SO...

ISN'T IT KIND OF SAD
THAT HE HAD TO KEEP APPEARENCES UP RIGHT UNTIL THE END
JUST BECAUSE OF HIS POSITION?
WELL, YOU'RE FREE TO THINK THAT WAY,
BUT I THINK IT'S UP TO HIM TO DECIDE WHETHER IT'S SAD OR NOT.
RELATIONSHIPS CHANGE FROM PERSON TO PERSON.
I GUESS YOU HAVE A POINT...
ALSO, I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE GETTING YOURSELF DOWN BY GUESSING PEOPLE'S RELATIONSHIPS ...
WELL, I'M SORRY.
.. ANYWAY, IF YOU'RE GOING TO IMAGINE WHAT IT WAS LIKE,
YOU'RE BETTER OFF THINKING POSITIVELY
HOW?
.. WELL, THIS IS JUST AN EXAMPLE, BUT,
LOOK AT IVAN AND MINERVA.
THEY CAME OUT A LITTLE AFTER SOFIA DID, RIGHT?
AND YOU COULD SMELL MINERVA'S PERFUME ON IVAN, RIGHT?
YEAH.
whOOsh
WELL, YEAH... BUT THAT JUST HAPPENS WHEN YOU'RE IN THE SAME ROOM ALL THE TIME, DOESN'T IT?
WELL, I GUESS I'LL ASK
WHAT ABOUT SOFIA'S PER-FUME?
...I DIDN'T SMELL IT AT ALL.
THEY PROBABLY SPENT A LOT OF TIME TOGETHER...
DOING SOMETHING THAT WOULD MAKE HER PERFUME CARRY OVER LIKE THAT.
WHAT?!

I'M TALKING ABOUT THE SCENE YOU OFTEN SEE PLAY OUT BEFORE THE RETRIEVAL.
...OH.
...I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE IMAGINING, BUT,
W-W-WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY ...
THEY PROBABLY ALREADY SAID THEIR GOODBYES PROPERLY, DON'T YOU THINK?
IT'S JUST A GUESS, THOUGH.
HEY, ZACK.
I'M GOING TO PAT YOU SO HARD WHEN WE GET HOME.
WHAT?
...I DON'T NEED YOUR PATS.
THAT WON'T DO ...
THAT'S JUST SOMETHING YOU WANT TO DO ...
whOOsh
..I SEE.

ruffle
ruffle

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Release Notes

Sorry for the longer wait this time.
Ch. 9 should be out significantly faster.